

Interview H0215: with Shakabpa, Wangchug Denden [tib. zhwa sgab pa, dbang phyug bde ldan], (India, 1983) : Part No. 5 of 13

W.D. Shakabpa was a very prominent aristocratic government official who held the rank of Tsipön. He is the author of "Tibet: A Political History." He continues speaking about Reting's pilgrimage and how Reting was received in Lhasa when he came back. Shakabpa discusses in detail about how Trimön told him to draft the petition for his resignation and how he saw the prophecy which proved that Trimön was the incarnation of the Dharma Minister when Samye was built and that Trimön was not crazy. He discusses the Panchen Lama's dispute with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government. Shakabpa explains how the Tibetan Government sent a letter to the Panchen Lama asking him to come back from exile after the Dalai Lama died and why that failed.

Q

Then you came from E Chundo Kyang, right?

A

Yes, we crossed the Yartö Dragla [tib. yar stod brag la] mountain pass and came through Yarlung.

Q

Did you go to Trandrug [tib. khra 'brug]?

A

No, he didn't visit Trandrug. We crossed the ferry site at Bentsa Trukha [tib. ban rtsa gru kha]

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Q

But Bentsa Trukha was not located in Yarlung.

A

It was in Yarlung. Oh! I am sorry. It was not Bentsa Trukha but Gepa Trukha [tib. gad pa gru kha]. From there we crossed the mountain pass and went into the Wön [tib. 'on] area. In Wön there was the place called Tashi Dokha [tib. bkra shis mdo kha]. Near there, was the main estate called Wön [Trimön](#) that belonged to [Trimön](#).

Q

Was that a big estate?

A

It was not that big, but it was a good one. The Regent stopped here for a while and they had some refreshments. The day I reached there, I had to depart for Sangri Khangmar [tib. zangs ri khang dmar], an estate belonging to [Sambo](#), to inform the Regent that [Trimön](#) had reached his estate. Later, I met [Sambo](#) and his family at Sangri [Norbulinga](#). [Sambo](#) was there at that time but later he became a shape.

Q

Sambo was not in the Regent's retinue, right?

A

Yes. [Sambo](#) had come to do the accommodation arrangements for the Regent. This park was called [Norbulinga](#) and was a very beautiful place with lovely gardens. When I reached there, they gave me a tent and I went to inform the Regent about Trimön's arrival at his estate. The Regent said that they would leave for Trimön's estate and stop there for snacks. The next day they would depart along with [Trimön](#) from Tashi Dokha and then he will go to Wön Chöding [tib. chos lding].

After reporting to the Regent, I went to pay homage to the deity Majig Labdrön [tib. ma cig lab sgron] at Sangri Khangmar and the next day I got up early and went to do a pilgrimage to the Densa Thil [tib. gdan sa mthil] Monastery. This was a very beautiful and holy place of the Phamodrupa [tib. phag mo gru pa] sect. There were numerous holy images to visit,

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but the most holy of them all was Phamodrupa. This image was placed in a small hut [tib. spyil bu] made from switches of alpine willow trees [tib. glang ma] and was known as the Jisoma [tib. byi so ma] Popular belief says that once a cat [tib. byi la] bit the statue's foot and the image shouted to the keeper that it had been bitten by a cat.

Q

What statue was that?

A

It was a statue of Phamodrupa. They also had marvelous relics [tib. nang rten]. This was also a very rich monastery because one of its pillar decorations was made out of pure gold - 100% pure gold. Since the Regent was coming to visit the monastery, they had taken out all their precious belongings and displayed them. The next day, [Trimön](#) went to Ngari Tratsang [tib. mnga' ris grwa tshang] which was about a mile from there to receive the Regent. They came back together and had lunch at Trimön's house. From there, both went together to Tashi Dokha. This was the place where [Tsongkapa](#) had given many of his teachings. This was also part of Trimön's estate. They then went to Chöding.

Q

There weren't any renovations to be made, right?

A

Yes. The main thing was to make offerings to the monks and apply gold to the faces of the statues. The official in charge of rituals [tib. zhabs brtan do dam pa] was there and he arranged everything. Then we crossed the river and went to Trandruk. On the ferry they had made a small house with windows of glass and a gilded roof (tib. gyaphib [rgya phibs]). This was made specially by the people of that locale.

In Tranduk, Reting Rinpoche consulted the deity Tshangpa [tib. tshangs pa] through a medium. He stayed there for 3 or 4 days. The famous idol of Tara, Drölma Sungjön [tib. sgrol ma gsung byon] which was believed to possess the power of speech, along with other principal idols in Tranduk were visited.

Q

The Drölma Sungjön was facing upwards and was placed near the door, right?

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A

This icon was near the door in the corner and it was facing towards the door. The main icon Nampar Nangdze [tib. rnam par snang mdzad] was facing downwards.

Q

The Drölma was a small one, right?

A

Yes. It was not that big and it was standing up. In Tranduk, the medium went into trance with the deity Tshangpa and showed some signs as a prophecy [tib. brtag gzhi].

Q

What kind of sign did he show?

A

I was not that attentive on that. They also did a Cham performance. After this, we went to the Chasa [tib. bya sa] Temple and the Namgyal Lhakhang [tib. rnam rgyal lha khang] Temple. Then at Yasang [tib. g.ya' bzang], they brought out their secret treasures and sacred images to be shown to the Regent since he should not go and visit these small places and these were shown to us during the [trungja](#).

Then they went to Sheldrag [tib. shel brag] and Thangoche [tib. thang go? che]. Sheldrag was a very high place and you had to travel quite a lot on rocks. Sheldrag was the famous cave where Guru Padma Sambawa had stayed. You can travel on Yak-back up to some distance, but after that you had to go on foot on stone steps.

Q

Did you have to go up for quite a long distance?

A

It was not that long. After that we went to Chongye Riwo Dechen [tib. 'phyongs rgyas ri [bo](#) bde chen] where we stayed for 2 days. In the higher part of Riwo Dechen, we went to the Jenye [tib. spyen yas] Monastery. One day, he went to visit the tomb of King Songtsen [tib. srong btsan bang so]. The next day, he had a break and the Regent asked the oracle

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to go into trance with the protector deity Tsimara in Riwo Dechen. When Tsimara entered the medium's body, I saw blood flowing from his mouth and nose. They said that the blood was really flowing out though I was not near to that. It was a very violent but brief session. When the deity had touched the people, everyone came out literally splattered with blood.

Q

Was it really true that blood flowed out from the medium's body? Normally, when Tsimara is invoked through a medium, a little blood was kept as an offering bowl? The blood could have been from the offerings?

A

Probably not. When Tsimara appears through the medium, they said that he was doing something. After that we went to Samye.

Q

From Trandug, you went to Riwo Dechen, right?

A

Yes. After the pilgrimage was over we went to an estate called Do [tib. mdo?] which belonged to Namgyal Tratsang. They had made arrangements for the Regent's arrival. In the higher part of the valley there was a monastery called 'Lo' [tib?]. There was a huge stupa made out of bronze said to be built by Gyalba Thontengpa [tib. rgyal ba don steng? pa]. In that Stupa, the legend says that the remains of the early Kadampa Geshe [tib. bka' gdams dge bshes] Neusurpa [tib. sne'u zur pa] was preserved. They also said that his teacher Dromtön Gyelwe Jungney's [tib. 'brom ston rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas] had pressed Neusurpa's head with his three fingers and you can see the [hollow] print of his fingers on the head of the remains. Probably, when the Neusurpa was alive, his teacher pressed his head with his fingers and his skull became hollow. However, we could not see this. The caretaker just explained to us about that [tib. gnas bshad]. Anyway, it was a very beautiful place.

Samye [tib. bsam yas] Dzong [tib. bsam yas rdzong] had made all the necessary arrangements there. Mr. Liushar was the person in charge of Wön Dzong [tib. 'on rdzong]. Liushar was appointed as the Overseer [tib. do dam pa] for renovating the Samye monastery and I was the [kadrung](#). Mr. Liushar used to come to make the report to

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the Kashag through me. Even nowadays we would talk about that. Samye had yet to be renovated. The Regent consecrated this place and a few years later, Samye was renovated. I was there from the beginning to the end. From Samye we crossed the Gökharla [tib. rgod 'khar la] mountain pass. As mentioned before, Liushar was appointed as the Overseer for renovating Samye and he was told to come to Lhasa to collect the necessary funds and grains to be paid to the laborers. The appointment was confirmed at Samye itself.

Q

Can such appointments be confirmed just like that? Maybe it was because a kalön and the [Trunyichemmo](#) and Tsipön were there, right?

A

Yes, there was a kalön. I don't think that there was a Tsipön, but [Ramba](#) was the [Trunyichemmo](#) and Dombo was there too, but I am not quite sure whether he was the [Trunyichemmo](#). But he was the Overseer of performing rituals [tib. zhabs brtan do dam]. He had his own staff and functioned separately. Although he was traveling with the Regent, he was functioning separately as the main official in charge of the rituals. He had even brought with him painters and tailors and many other people.

Q

When the Regent was on tour like this, did the government have to make all the arrangements like providing horses and so one?

A

No. It had to be arranged privately. We didn't impose much horse corvée. However, we did use the people as a sort of tax, to collect hay and fuels and to look after the horses and as kitchen servants [tib. rta g.yog thab g.yog]. The horses, mules, and tents were to be arranged by ourselves privately. The Regent was very particular and took great care of his horses and mules. The people who look after these animals were treated well and he made them wear a specific [hat](#) known as 'Arsha' [tib. ar zhwa].

Q

What does this [hat](#) Arsha look like?

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A

You can see this [hat](#) being worn by the [Amdo](#) dancers. That [hat](#) is called Arsha. Reting Rinpoche fancied this [hat](#) so he made his attendants and grooms and the person who leads his horse wear them. He also had a yen for beautiful weapons and all his attendants were armed handsomely. The Regent was a very happy and carefree person by nature. He would send the Government officials ahead of him and tell them to wait him at the place where they would stop for meal and he would come later with his friends and attendants.

Sometimes they would stop on the way and have a round of target shooting. I heard that he would also sing opera songs. [Trimön](#) did not stay behind and accompany the Regent, but had to go ahead with the other officials. The Regent was a very jovial and happy-go-lucky type of person. He would travel leisurely with his friends and personal attendants. They would sing along the way and I was told that the Regent would take part in the target shootings. However, when we were about to reach the place where we would stop, then we had to form a group and reach the place together.

Q

If among the [tsidrung](#) and the lay officials, someone was good at singing and fun loving, could he stay back and travel with the Regent's cavalry?

A

I don't think so. Among the government servants they had no one like that, but Phünkhang Jedrung [tib. phun khang rje drung] and Agu Tönpa [tib. a khu ston pa] were there.

Q

Were these Phünkhang Jedrung and Agu Tönpa brought along just because they were good singers and entertainers?

A

Yes. I think Nyungne Lama [tib. snyung gnas bla ma] was there too. They were the entertainers of the Regent.

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Q

How long did they stay in Samye?

A

They stayed in Samye for about one week. In Samye again the deity Tsimara was consulted through the oracle going to trance. All these prophesies given by the Tsimara and others were kept a secret.

Q

You didn't need to record them in the Kashag's annual book?

A

We didn't have to record them if the matter involved the Regent.

Q

Where were these records kept?

A

Most probably, they were kept at the Shö ga and it was looked after by the [shöndrön](#).

Q

Were those secret matters recorded?

A

I don't know. As far as the Kashag was concerned, if the kalön tells us to record such and such things, only then do we record them. Otherwise, we don't. We got correspondences, other important matters and day to day happenings sent to us by "pony express" messengers [tib. a drung] everyday. To all these, replies and decisions were sent the same way. As far as I was concerned, there wasn't any hardship caused to the [miser](#). There were two overseers for riding horses and the pack animals [tib. rta [khe](#) do dam pa] and there were 2 overseers for the accommodation arrangements [tib. phebs sgrig do dam pa]. They would go ahead and make the arrangements.

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Q

I heard that the Regent and [Trimön](#) had their meals together, was that correct?

A

No, they took their meals separately on all occasions with an exception at Dakpo Rame [tib. ra smad] (The Regent's birth place). At Dakpo Rame, [Trimön](#) was invited to the Regent's place most of the evenings for 4-5 days and mostly he would stay late. So I guess he might have had his meals there though he wouldn't eat with the Regent. He would return late to his chamber and would not eat anything. Otherwise, they were eating separately and their residences were also separate at a distance from each other.

Q

Who was staying in between the Regent and [Trimön](#)?

A

The tents of the Regent's personal attendants who were in charge of serving food and clothing and religious objects (tib. the Sösim Chösum [gsol gzim mchod gsum]) and the nendrön's tents were pitched there. And there were also tents of the Kashag which were pitched quite a distance away. No one was allowed to stay very close to the Regent except for his personal attendants and friends.

Q

After that you all returned to Lhasa?

A

No. From there we crossed the mountain pass and reached Dechen Sangngaga Monastery [tib. bde chen gsang sngags ka]. The Regent visited this monastery which had a lot of secret and sacred items and there was a statue of Mahakala (tib. Gönpö [mgon po]). Here we saw the dress and the slingshot of the famous character known as Agu Tönpa [tib. a khu ston pa] and since I love books, during a lunch recess, I just borrowed some of the books at the monastery and read them. They said that normally they were not allowed to take them out.

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I saw one handwritten [tib. bris ma] manuscript that was an autobiography of Agu Tönpa. It was tied in between two flat wooden slabs because a painting acting as a cover. Unlike most such traditional covers which tend to be colorfully decorated, it was plain. It was tied up with thin leather strips. When I opened this text and read through them at random, I came across a passage about the 7th Dalai Lama. I was very curious and wanted to go through it, but some of the government officials asked me what are you reading and I had to pass it around. So, I could not go through it properly. I really wanted to read this and find out more about this curious book and take notes about the dates and the author, but unfortunately, I did not get a second opportunity.

Q

You couldn't take it away, right?

A

Then we saw the Agu Tönpa's chuba which was made out of deer skin [tib. shwa lpags]. It was not much different from the present chuba in design and style. The sling was made in the most popular style known as Chumig Gudrig [tib. [chu](#) mig dgu sgrig] which means the nine-eyed sling. While my colleagues were busy examining the dress and the sling, I went through this manuscript again. I was wondering whether I would be allowed to take it to the place where we spend the night. But they sealed it after it was shown to someone. I came across the passage where he mentioned the 7th Dalai Lama.

Q

Agu Tönpa was not a contemporary of the 7th Dalai Lama?

A

I am not sure about this.

Q

Probably, the 7th Dalai Lama told somebody to write it down?

A

The next page mentioned about Agu Tönpa reaching the Phenpo area. Further on, it told about his visit to the place called Yünga Sedrong [tib. yul lnga gsal grong] and how

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he played with the children grazing sheep and said something. After that, he went to the place called Chumda [tib. [chu](#) mda'] where there was the "Seven Days Buddha." [tib. zhag bdun sangs rgyas]. It also mentioned Agu Tönpa's mother's death. I couldn't read any further since they collected all these priceless relics and I had no choice but to close this interesting book since the [nendrön](#) collected also some of the pages and then they put it back in the chapel. This manuscript definitely confirms that Agu Tönpa existed. This was written in hand writing and contained over 200 pages.

Q

This biography might have contained a lot of stories and information which are not normally told about Agu Tönpa?

A

It looked like that. Since we had been told so many interesting and witty stories about Agu Tönpa in our childhood, I really wanted to go through this manuscript but unfortunately I couldn't.

Q

Why did we Tibetans lock up all these precious manuscripts?

A

That was one of the stupidities of our people.

Q

Even the 5th Dalai Lama sealed up all the works of Jayang Chöje [tib. 'jam dbyangs chos rje], the founder of the Drepung Monastery.

Q

Did you go to Dorjedrag [tib. rdo rje brag]?

A

No. Then we left for Lhasa after staying for a night at the Dechen Sangngaka. All these relics were locked up sealed again on the same day by the [nendrön](#), so I did not get a chance to go through this manuscript again.

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Q

Who was the [nendrön](#) to the Regent?

A

Ngawang Tenzin [tib. ngag dbang bstan 'dzin], who later became the personal attendant of the Dalai Lama and also one of the Jigyab Khenpo. He used to live at [Shöl](#) and was known as the abbot of [Shöl](#). He was a sharp-tongued man. Phala who later became the [drönyerchemmo](#) to the Dalai Lama was one of the [shöndrön](#). He used to stay where we were. I asked the Kashag whether I could borrow the Agu Tönpa's book, but they said since it was sealed with the Regent's seal, it was impossible. Usually, when the Dalai Lama came there, it used to be sealed with the Dalai Lama's seal [tib. sbug dam].

The next day the kalön came to receive the Regent. Then we stopped for a meal in Gungthang [tib. [gung](#) thang] and by the evening, we reached Lhasa. At Lhasa, everyone had to go to [Shide](#) [tib. bzhi bde] where the Regent had his headquarters. There was no official function, but when we reached there, the Regent's Labrang served us tea. After that everyone went to their respective homes. From Gungthang until we reached Lhasa everybody had to wear the Gyaluche [tib. rgya lu chas] dress. Before that, we wore Tsechuma chuba with a vest [ch. jia jia].

Q

These were Mongolian costumes [tib. sog chas], right?

A

Yes.

Q

Was the Mongolian Dress and the Traveling Dress [tib. phyogs chas] the same or what?

A

The [hat](#) was called Togsha [tib. tog zhwa] (flat round [hat](#)).

Q

Was that Shangmao [ch. shang mao]?

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A

No, it was a round [hat](#). We had the Gyaluche dress with us and we wore it at the ceremony in Chönkhorgyal. All the [tsidrun](#)g and lay officials had come to receive the Regent at the Lhadong Shanga [tib. lha gdong shan kha] ferry site.

Q

What major events took place after they returned to Lhasa?

A

Trimön resigned.

Q

Was it true that after their return to Lhasa, they did not publicize what Reting had seen in the 'Sacred Lake' for one year?

A

I do not know clearly about these things.

Q

Some people even started saying that Reting has not revealed what he had seen for one year, so it seems he had seen nothing in the 'Sacred Lake', although he pretends to have seen something. So was the reason for maintaining silence for one year, owing to the year being a black year, Lonag [tib. lo nag] or a black month, Danag [tib. zla nag]. [According to Tibetan astrological calculations, black years and black months are bad and during which important works were withheld]?

A

I don't know the reason for this. However, regarding Trimön's resignation; I know about that well. During our visit to the 'Sacred Lake' we stayed for five days at Ramey, the birth-place of Reting Rinpoche. During those five days, [Trimön](#) and Reting Rinpoche sat together and talked until very late in the night for 4-5 days. Then after five days, we left for Dakla Gambo [tib. dwags la sgam po]. At Dakla Gambo, arrangements for our stay were very good as well as the place itself. At this place, [Trimön](#) called me from his house and

told me to draft a petition for resignation. He told me to mention about his services as a kalön, his visit to the Kham area and finally his service in building the Golden Stupa of the late Dalai Lama. And that since he was very advanced in age now, he would like to ask permission to resign from government service to devote the remaining part of his life to religious pursuits in repenting for his non-virtuous deeds [tib. zhabs brtan bshags 'doms]. I asked him why he made such a sudden decision. His sons were also not there. I was only his nephew. So I told him that I could not draft that petition. But he insisted that I should do it, so I drafted the petition as dictated by him.

Q

Was the petition addressed to the Regent?

A

Yes. It was to the Regent. Then when we returned to Lhasa, [Trimön](#) called [Lukhangwa](#) [tib. klu khang] and asked him to make corrections on the draft petition, and he made the final petition.

We are human beings, so when we talk about another person, it is always affected by our relationship with that person. Since [Trimön](#) was related to us, we always regarded him in a fair person [tib. snang ba dag] and we talked about him in that light. We always believed that [Trimön](#) was faultless. Especially when we went to Tsari, we had to pass through one mountain pass called Shakam-la [tib?] which was covered by ice and snow. While crossing this pass, one of Trimön's servants named Ada [tib. a dar] slipped and fell into a water ditch. He was carrying a few [pecha](#) and an umbrella on his back. We managed to pull him out but the [pecha](#) had been totally drenched. Not very far from there, we halted our journey and [Trimön](#) told me that he would perform the 'Tshog offering prayer.' He used to call me son and asked me to dry the [pecha](#). When I scattered the [pecha](#) pages for drying, I saw a letter sent to [Trimön](#) by Tertön Sögyal [tib. gter ston bsod rgyal] who was a lama who discovered hidden religious objects. In that letter, it was mentioned that Trimön's name had been prophesied in a hidden prophecy (tib. Terlung [gter lung]). The letter further revealed that the soul stone [tib. bla rdo] of the deity Harya Girwa and Dorje Phagmo [tib. rta phag; rta mgrin/ rdo rje phag mo] should be brought up from Gulog [tib. mgu log]. It said that you have the responsibility for recommending it and you should report about this to the Dalai Lama. All these were mentioned in the letter. I gave the [pecha](#) to him when they were dried, but he did not show any expression that he suspected me of

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seeing the letter. I too did not show any sign that I had seen the letter. It was also written that [Trimön](#) was the incarnation of the Dharma Minister Chölon Dorje Trichung [tib. chos blon rdo rje kre chung].

Q

Who was this person?

A

He was the one who built the stupa in Samye. Then from there we all reached Samye. We visited all the stupas of Samye. During the visit, [Trimön](#) climbed up the Blue Stupa, Chöten Ngönpo [tib. mchod rten sngon po], up to its center portion which was made out of blue tiles [tib. g.yu rtsi]. He said, 'Look son, (He always use to call me son.) you see the lead band around this stupa. I did all these.' It is mentioned in the Kathang [tib. bka' thang] [Kathang is a holy book written by the Padmasambhawa] that this (Blue Stupa) Chöten Ngönpo was built by Chölön Dorje Trechung.

Incidentally, among the [pecha](#) that I saw, while drying, I came across one mentioning [Trimön](#) as the incarnation of Chölön Dorje Trichung. So from my vantage, I saw [Trimön](#) in his proper sense, in other words there was nothing unusual or strange in his behavior. Just before the petition was sent to the Regent, [Trimön](#) started wearing a white lower garment, Shamthab [tib. sham thabs dkar po]. [the lower garment worn by tantric practitioners] and he also went around the [Barkor](#) Street. While [Lukhangwa](#) and I see this behavior of [Trimön](#) as a ploy to get his resignation, even after the petition had been sent to the Regent, [Trimön](#) went on wearing the white lower garment. Then the Lama Kharak [Yongdzin](#) Rinpoche [mkha' rag yongs 'dzin rin po che] was invited to Namdröling [tib. nam grol gling].

While coming back from there, he [Trimön] told me that he would be coming to our estate to worship the deities (he was born in our estate.). When I asked him what date he was going to come on? He told me the exact date he would be coming. So he came to our estate on the date he said with Kharak Rinpoche. Both [Trimön](#) and Kharak Rinpoche were wearing the dress worn by the lamas who discovered hidden treasure (tib. terche [gter chas]), with the cap. Probably, they took out something from Kharag. I took photographs of these. When he (Trimön) went to Lhasa, he wasn't wearing the cap, but was wearing the white lower garment and white boots worn by the [tsidrung](#) and monastic officials [tib. ras zom] and he was also wearing a monk's vest [tib. sku 'gag]. He went to Reting

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Labrang, the [Barkor](#) and the market places of Lhasa without being bothered by this. He was in a fierce and violent mental state during that time. He went around the Lingkor (the outer circle circumambulation) very early in the morning. He also went to the [Jokhang](#) for pilgrimage.

Usually, when you want to go inside the [Jokhang](#), you had to bang a bell at the main gate and the man in charge will come out to open the gate. During one of Trimön's visits, many people had gathered at the main gate as the man in charge had not come out to open the gate. As soon as he came out and opened the gate, [Trimön](#) hit the man in charge with a stick, and scolded him for not opening the door for the people. He did such things and it did seem that he was a bit in a disturbed mental state. So it was during this time that people started saying that [Trimön](#) had gone mad. But we, the relatives of [Trimön](#), looked at it from a different angle. We believed that [Trimön](#) was simply feigning to be a mad man. I saw it written in Kusangtse's letter that [Trimön](#) was going to be the Prime Minister so he was confident that he would become the Prime Minister, and so he acted in that way, wearing the white lower garment and going around in the market place. This was what Kusangtse had said, but this was a weak theory in the sense that if he wanted to be the Prime Minister, he would not have behaved in that way. In fact, he would have been more careful and serious about what he did. It is hard to believe that someone who behaved like a mad man would be made Prime Minister. I used to tell Kusangtse about this in Dharamsala.

Q

What did he say?

A

He said this was what the Lhasa people said. Then again, it was said that he played cymbals in the Wongtö Shingkhā [tib. 'ong stod zhing ga] market place. This was true. He did play the cymbals there. But there were two ways to look at all this. As a response to his petition for resignation, the government gave him the resignation and gave him the kalön's estate (tib. Kashi Sharchog [bka' gzhis shar phyogs]). In his petition, he had said that he wanted to spend the later part of his life doing prayers and meditation to repent his negative deeds in a secluded place. This was what I had drafted when he told me to do that. But the final petition was corrected by [Lukhangwa](#) and was presented to the Regent.

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So regarding his wish to become the Prime Minister, nobody can say for certain the real motives or the facts. His behavior as a mad man has to be seen from two different angles.

Q

It seems he attended the Kashag even after he was granted the resignation?

A

No. He never attended the Kashag.

Q

Some say that he attended the Kashag for quite some time. According to the decree issued by Reting, he should have attended the Kashag only when there were important matters in the Kashag, right?

A

There were no such orders.

Q

I heard that actually his seat in the Kashag was still there. So when [Trimön](#) continued to attend the Kashag, one day [Bönshö](#) told [Trimön](#), "When we requested you not to resign, you never heeded our request. Now that you have been granted the resignation, you should stop attending the Kashag." He said this and pulled away his seat. I heard something like this, right?

A

I never heard about that. [Bönshö](#) was one of the kalön and the other two were Trekhang and Langchungpa.

Q

After Trimön's resignation, was [Bönshö](#) the senior-most kalön?

A

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Actually, Langchungpa was the senior most member after [Trimön](#), and after Langchungpa, [Bönshö](#) would become the senior kalön. So these were the incidents about [Trimön](#). Later he died. He died in an imposing manner [tib. nyams byas]

Q

It seems he was beyond [human] understanding [tib. bsam gyis mi khyab pa], right?

A

Yes. He was very extraordinary. The idea to file his petition for resignation first arose when he was at Chökhorgyal. I am certain about it.

Q

I heard that Reting Rinpoche had told [Trimön](#), "As long as you are in the Kashag, I am at peace." When [Trimön](#) replied, "I am old and have to resign", Reting said, "We cannot carry on without you. If you resign, I too have to resign." Was that true?

A

I am quite certain that they did have long talks for about four or five days till late in the night. They used to even have their meals together. My impression was that since the place (Ramey) was very pleasant, they were having talks in their leisure time in a very happy mood. Actually, the idea for his resignation was born at that place.

Q

Did [Trimön](#) ask for his resignation as soon as he was back in Lhasa?

A

It was soon after his returning to Lhasa.

Q

Was it before the search team for Dalai Lama's reincarnation had left Lhasa?

A

I think his resignation was before they had left.

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Q

So the search teams for the Dalai Lama's reincarnation went to the northern area (tib. Changrig, [byang rigs]), Dakpo and [Amdo](#).

A

Yes. These things I mentioned in my book very clearly. Phurchog [tib. phur mchog] Rinpoche went to the southern area and Dakpo [tib. lho dwags] together with our Khenjung [Trekhang] as his assistant. Khangser [tib. khangser] Rinpoche and [the lay official] Driyü [tib. 'bri yul] went to the Markham area. And Ketshang [tib. [ke](#) tshang] went to [Amdo](#). All of them were from [Sera Je](#) College [tib. byes].

Q

Were there lamas who were selected by the Kashag?

A

Reting Rinpoche selected them and then later he might have had consultations with the Kashag. I don't think the selection was done by the Kashag. It was most probably done by Reting Rinpoche.

Q

Where was the Panchen Lama at that time?

A

The Panchen Lama was either in China or Xining. Kusangtse and Ketsang Rinpoche had met the Panchen Lama at some place in [Amdo](#) and they told him that there were certain possible places where they expected to find the Dalai Lama's reincarnation.

Q

What made the Panchen Lama to go to China?

A

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I don't know much about it, but the main reason was the tax requiring paying one fourth of the military salary [tib. dmag phogs bzhi zur] that was imposed by [Lungshar](#). This was the main reason.

Q

Did the Panchen Lama send an appeal to the government against this tax?

A

Yes. He came down [to Lhasa] and made the appeal. Prior to that, the [Dalai Lama] seemed to have suspected that the Panchen Lama had left for a long distance or to another place. When the Panchen Lama said that he wanted to go to [Tö](#) [tib. stod] for a pilgrimage, there was a letter from the Dalai Lama telling him not to go.

The Panchen Lama was building the statue of the Maitreya Buddha (tib. Champa [byams pa]). In a letter sent to the Dalai Lama, he said that he would like to come to receive an initiation from the Dalai Lama after the completion of the building of the Champa statue and after that he wanted to go to the [Tö](#) area on a pilgrimage. The Dalai Lama's reply to this was that he must first complete the building of a statue of Champa. The Dalai Lama was going to be in retreat for awhile and after that if he had leisure time he should come down (to Lhasa) and that he should not contemplate going for a pilgrimage to a long distance.

There were two letters and both the letters mentioned the same thing: he should not go for the pilgrimage. Later, the Panchen Lama came to Lhasa and stayed for about two months. During his stay in Lhasa, he appealed to the government, but I don't think he achieved anything. In Lhasa, he performed many religious ceremonies and gave the Long-Life-Initiation [tib. tshe dbang] and something on Shambala [tib. sham bha la] and I went to receive it.

Q

What did he give on Shambala?

A

He gave a reading transmission. [tib. ljags lung]

Q

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When the Panchen Lama was in China, the Chinese conferred on him a special status or title called, "The General Intellectual Master of the West Side [tib. nub phyogs sa khul gyi shes yon spyi khyab chen mo], right?

A

That was later, when the Panchen Lama was about to return to Tibet.

Q

What did the title mean?

A

It was a certificate [tib. phyag khyer] conferred by the Guomindang. The Tibetan Representatives' Office in China, Khendrön Losum, had informed the government that the Chinese had conferred this title to the Panchen. At that time, the officers of Khendrön Losum were Dzasa Gyetakpa [tib. dza sag rgyal rtags pa], Kungö Chönphel Thupten and Kungö Ngawang Drakpa.

The Panchen Lama was in Beijing, and the government sent a letter to the Panchen Lama requesting him to return. The letter said that the Dalai Lama was no more and the situation will be very despairing if the Panchen Lama stayed in the China. So he should return to Tibet instead of staying in a foreign country. The Guomindang Government, which became aware of this letter, announced that they conferred on the Panchen Lama the above mentioned title. This letter to the Panchen Lama was sent through the Khendrön Losum office. According to Khendrön Losum officers, Kungö Chönphel Thupten and the others, they had great difficulties in presenting the letter directly to the Panchen Lama. If those things were facts, they should say that. But if it was not true, then this caused a hindrance [tib. 'gal rkyen] [to the relation between the Kashag and the Panchen Lama]. When they requested a private audience, at the beginning, they didn't give the date of the audience and later they were denied and told us that they could see Panchen Lama during a public audience and they were told to submit the letter through an aide [tib. mgron rgyud].

Later they were given an audience along with other people instead of giving it in the chamber. Later, when they were given the audience, they were offered three very worn out brocade carpets to sit on, which was very uncomfortable for high government officials. And when they submitted the letter from the Regent, the Prime Minister and the Kashag,

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the Panchen Lama said something like you said that [because you] are in a desperate situation [tib. ma zhu rang zhu] So the three officers of Khendrön Losum said that was the treatment given to them and according to these attitudes, there were indications that something was amiss. Shortly after that, the Chinese said that they were sending the Chinese-military escort with the Panchen Lama.

Q

The real cause, as I heard, was regarding the Champa statue. What was it about?

A

There was no trouble regarding the statue of Lord Champa. It was built magnificently.

Q

Regarding the building of this statue, probably the Dalai Lama gave full support.

A

Yes, probably. The Chandzö of Ngor [tib. ngor] called Karma Chöwang [tib. kar ma chos dbang] was a close friend of mine. I used to stay in his house when I visited my teacher, Kachen Gyurmey [tib. bka' chen 'gyur med] Rinpoche of [Tashilhunpo](#). The treasurer told me that the statue was built on a grand scale. He told me the amount of gold bricks and several thousands of loads of copper that was used in its construction. He told me that the 13th Dalai Lama also contributed lavishly a great amount of gold. I didn't ask him about the amount of gold and I was not that attentive to it. Officials of the Panchen Lama told him that if you build such a big size statue, later you might not be able to manage it. But the Panchen Lama told them, "Go ahead and build it according to the size that was fixed. There won't be any problem and we could manage it. I don't have any relations with [Tashilhunpo](#) but I learned scriptures from Kachen, but he didn't tell me about that.

Q

Wasn't there talk about that the British Government talked through Nanjing regarding the Panchen Lama coming back to Tibet?

A

I didn't know about that.

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Q

So, finally the Panchen Lama reached Jyekundo [tib. skye rgu mdo], right?

A

Yes. I learned that from the Tsondu. I learned that he had departed from Nanjing and would be coming via Xining. The government then sent Doring Theiji [tib. rdo ring tha'i ji] and the representatives from the three great monasteries, to receive him.

Q

Probably there was a Khenjung and a Rimshi?

A

I don't remember that.

Q

Did the Panchen Lama finally accept the letter presented to him in Nanjing?

A

I don't know whether he finally got the letter or not, but the Tibet government lodged its protest against the Chinese.

Q

On what grounds did the Tibetan government protest?

A

The Tibetan Government protested against the new title conferred on Panchen Lama. It said that the new title was not acceptable to the Tibetan Government since the Panchen Lama already had a title and rank.

Q

I heard that this petition was delivered through the British, right?

A

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This issue came up in the Tsondu and the protest petition was given by the Khendrön Losum. The protest was over the title issue. When the Panchen Lama didn't yield to them well, they were disappointed and sent a report. The government disagreed with the title that was like that of a professor [tib. dge rgan chen mo].

Q

Actually, there was nothing to disagree with a title of professor, probably, they disagreed with the title called "General Intellectual Master of the West Side." What was Panchen Lama's reply to the letter presented by Khendrön Losum requesting him to return to Tibet?

A

He replied that if it was the wish of the people of Tibet, I will return to my own governing place [tib. skyong yul].